

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Albert Woodfox shines light on prison abuse, solitary confinement  
— PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 83/NO. 15 APRIL 15, 2019

## Cease-fire can open political space in Israel and in Gaza

BY TERRY EVANS

A cease-fire agreement between the Israeli government and Hamas, the ruling Palestinian party in the Gaza Strip, was signed March 25, brokered by the Egyptian military-led government. It came after Hamas had fired rockets into Israel and Israel Defense Forces retaliated with airstrikes on Gaza.

The exchange followed a year of provocative anti-Israel actions led by Hamas on the border that the Israeli rulers have responded to with deadly fire. Any steps to lessen military conflicts would create better conditions for working people in both Gaza and Israel.

Following the agreement, the Israeli government reopened border crossings into Gaza, letting in much needed food and fuel and extended the areas where Palestinian fishermen can go in the Mediterranean Sea. In exchange Hamas said it would keep marches it organizes away from the border fence with Israel and would

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## SWP launches drive to expand reach of books and 'Militant'

BY TERRY EVANS

To advance the work of the Socialist Workers Party in exchanging views and sharing experiences with workers, farmers, and other exploited producers, and laying the groundwork for working together, the party has launched a drive to expand the readership of revolutionary books and the *Militant*, and to reach broadly for contributions to the Militant Fighting Fund, running April 6-May 28.

Through discussions with workers and farmers on their doorsteps and at labor and other protests, party members will learn more about the conditions working people are facing and their thinking about what needs to be done. And they will find openings to introduce the party's program and activities. They will travel out widely in cities, towns and along country roads.

"A revolutionary party uses every example of capitalist oppression to clarify how working people can overcome the efforts of the bosses and their political system to deepen

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## Uber drivers fight bosses' pay cuts across California

'Uber and cab drivers need a union to fight back'



Militant/Bernie Senter

March 25 protest outside Uber headquarters in Redondo Beach during 25-hour drivers' strike against bosses' 25 percent pay cut. Actions also took place in San Francisco, San Diego.

BY BERNIE SENTER

REDONDO BEACH, Calif. — Uber drivers held a 25-hour strike March 25 to demand the company reverse a 25 percent per mile pay cut it imposed on drivers in Los Angeles and parts of Orange counties. Two hundred of the striking Uber driv-

ers were joined by drivers for Lyft to protest in front of Uber headquarters here. Protests were also held in San Francisco and San Diego against similar cuts.

"In 2015, I was making between \$1.15 and \$1.20 per mile," driver Es-

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## New Jersey protest: 'Driver's license is a necessity for immigrant workers'



Militant/Janet Post

Protest in Bridgeton, New Jersey, March 17, one in a series of demonstrations demanding driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. This would be an advance for working-class unity.

BY JENNY KING

BRIDGETON, N.J. — As part of a series of actions across the state over the last several years to demand the state government provide access to driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, over 100 people marched here March 17. Cosecha New Jersey, which organized the protest, announced that it has called for a statewide protest in Perth Amboy May 1.

The march began and ended with

testimony from participants on the impact of not being able to get driver's licenses. Along with workers from Bridgeton, participants came from Red Bank, Elizabeth, Passaic, Perth Amboy, Lakewood, Vineland and other cities and towns.

"I've lived in Bridgeton for 30 years and it's always the same story," Marco Antonio Ibarra told the crowd. "It's a business for the Bridgeton police.

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## Two-year-long anti-Trump 'Russia collusion' witch hunt fizzles out

BY TERRY EVANS

For over two years since Donald Trump was elected president, the liberal media, Democratic Party and the middle-class left have been obsessed with finding a way to bring his ad-

ministration down. They lionized Robert Mueller, a former head of the FBI political police who was appointed as special counsel by the assistant attorney general, fervently convinced he would find some bombshell that would bring Trump to his knees — and maybe to prison.

When Mueller finally submitted his report March 22, he was forced to admit there was no "collusion" between Trump and Moscow that led

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## Ongoing trade rivalry between US and Chinese rulers ripples worldwide

BY ROY LANDERSEN

High-level negotiations continue in the yearlong trade dispute between Beijing and Washington with both governments reporting progress toward an agreement. Any short-term reset of trading relations would ease tensions, but won't resolve the rivalry between the two biggest players in the world capitalist economy. While Washington remains dominant, China's rulers have a long view and see a future where they're on top.

The U.S. imperialist rulers are using their waning — but still greater — economic and military preponder-

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Chicago hospital workers rally to protest short staffing, low pay



# New Zealand rulers use mosque attacks to target political rights

**BY FELICITY COGGAN**  
AUCKLAND, New Zealand — In the two weeks since a rightist lone wolf shooter killed 50 worshippers at two mosques in Christchurch, working people in their thousands have turned out to rallies and vigils, looking to express their opposition to racism and anti-Muslim bigotry. Close to \$16 million New Zealand dollars (\$10.9 million) has been donated to victims of the attack.  
But the Labour-led coalition headed by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has taken advantage of the widespread working-class solidarity to rally political support behind the government and its banner of classless “national unity.” The capitalist rulers she speaks for have seized on the killings to move to threaten political rights, boost their

police and spy agencies and step up censorship.  
On March 29 the central government, Christchurch City Council and some local Muslim and Maori organizations hosted a national “We Are One” service in Christchurch, attended by government delegations from Australia and 58 other countries. Similar events were held around the country. Ardern received a standing ovation from the tens of thousands gathered, while hundreds of armed police, including police snipers flown in from Australia, patrolled the park.  
More than 250 detectives and other cops, including Australian police and FBI agents from the U.S., are investigating the shooting rampage by Brenton Tarrant, a self-proclaimed “eco-fascist” originally from Australia.  
Police Commissioner Mike Bush announced March 25 that all front-line police will now carry guns. Previously, New Zealand police carried pepper spray, batons and Tasers, but not guns except in special circumstances. They’re now wearing Glock pistols and either carry semi-automatic rifles or have them ready in their police cars. Armed cops have been deployed at public events across the country.  
The same day Ardern set up a Royal Commission of Inquiry into why the twin government spy agencies — the



New Zealand Labour government is using rightist’s killing of 50 people at two mosques to expand use of their political police and target workers’ rights. Cops will now carry guns, including assault weapons, above.

is fast-tracking moves to strengthen existing laws on “hate speech” and making “hate crimes” illegal.  
Free speech on the internet is being targeted. Ardern welcomed a decision by Facebook to ban posts, photos and content supporting “white nationalism.” But who decides what ideas and isms should be censored? Privacy Commissioner John Edwards called on Facebook to give the names of people who distributed the video to police.  
Groups on the middle-class left are pushing the idea that there is a rise in racism and anti-Muslim prejudice in the working class. “Love Aotearoa Hate Racism” held a rally and march that drew thousands in central Auckland March 24 to “tackle all forms of racism on our streets and in our workplaces.”

But an anti-Semitic rant by one of the speakers went unchallenged by rally organizers. Ahmed Bhamji, chairman of a mosque in the suburb of Mt. Roskill, claimed the gunman was funded by Israeli government intelligence agency Mossad and “Zionist business.”

“These conspiracy theories are dangerous lies,” New Zealand Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses said. “They put the Jewish community at risk.”

Ardern’s use of the killings to shut down political space has won enthusiastic praise from the international liberal media in the U.S. and elsewhere. “Ms. Ardern has shown the way,” said a March 21 editorial in the *New York Times*.

The government-led promotion of “national unity” has led to other setbacks for working people. Leaders of the Post Primary Teachers’ Association, the union that organizes high school teachers, called off a nationwide strike planned for April 3, saying it was “the only choice” after the attack.

Security Intelligence Service and the Government Communications Security Bureau — didn’t have Tarrant’s name on spy watch lists in either New Zealand or Australia. Their goal is to strengthen the powers of the capitalist rulers’ political police.

## Government attacks political rights

Amid a barrage of media columns blaming the massacre on “white” people and racism, guns or social media, the government is pushing to strengthen censorship. This atmosphere is stifling political discussion by working people.

Four days after the attack Ardern said she would never use Tarrant’s name. Auckland Mayor Phil Goff has called for the judge at his trial to silence Tarrant any time he “starts to rave about his ideology.”

Tarrant’s 74-page “manifesto,” posted online before the attack, has been banned by Chief Censor David Shanks, making those who possess, distribute or possibly even quote it liable to up to 14 years in jail or a NZ\$10,000 fine. Minister of Justice Andrew Little

## New International no. 12 Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun

by Jack Barnes



pathfinderpress.com

# THE MILITANT

## Build fighting alliance of workers, farmers

*The ‘Militant’ covers fights by working farmers — from the solidarity among workers and farmers after Midwest flooding to fights by dairy and other family farmers against the capitalist squeeze by banks and agribusiness, which drives them deeper into debt and off the land.*



McCook Gazette/Connie Jo Driscoe  
Volunteers in McCook, Nebraska, with supplies for farm families hit by recent flooding.

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## The Militant

Vol. 83/No. 15

Closing news date: April 3, 2019

Editor: John Studer

**Editorial volunteers:** Róger Calero, Terry Evans, Seth Galinsky, Emma Johnson, Martin Koppel, Jacob Perasso, Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January, one week in June, one week in July, one week in September.

**Business Manager:** Valerie Johnson  
The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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**Website:** www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

**SUBSCRIPTIONS: United States:** For one year send \$35 to above address.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*’s views. These are expressed in editorials.



# SWP book, ‘Militant’ drive

Continued from front page

competition and divisions among us,” explains SWP National Secretary Jack Barnes in the introduction to the book *Tribunes of the People and the Trade Unions*, by Karl Marx, V.I. Lenin, Leon Trotsky, Farrell Dobbs and Barnes, which will come off the press during the drive. Their writings “show how we can work together in political actions, social protests, and solidarity activity in our common class interests,” Barnes adds.

The party aims to sell 1,050 books and the same number of *Militant* subscriptions, and to raise \$115,000 for the fund.

Party members find growing interest in unions and workers’ battles. “I am interested in the union question for restaurant workers. We’re in the trenches everyday, it’s like a war,” Ashley Brown told SWP campaigners Rachele Fruit and Lisa Potash when they knocked on her door in Fayetteville, Georgia, March 27. After being injured working as a cook at a Jones Beach restaurant in New

ests in the face of the bosses’ assaults.

“Workers need to rely on our own forces and build our own organizations,” she said. “Because of the big victory over Jim Crow segregation in the 1960s, we’re in a better position to do that today. We’re more united.” The socialist campaigners plan to return for further discussion.

## Amnesty for workers without papers

SWP members from St. Paul campaigned in Montrose, Cokato and Howard Lake, three towns in central Minnesota, March 23. David Rosenfeld, the party’s candidate for St. Paul City Council, met personal care assistant Donna Dye in Cokato.

Dye described how many working farmers there had to sell or rent out some of their land to make a living. She told Rosenfeld the money President Donald Trump wants to use to build a wall along the Mexico border could be used “a lot better, for kids that go hungry or for rebuilding after all the flooding that is going on right now.”

The capitalist rulers don’t want to stop immigration, Rosenfeld said, “but use it to drag wages down for all workers and blame immigrants for the problems we face. But they are victims of this dog-eat-dog system like all workers. We call for an amnesty for workers without what the U.S. government calls proper papers, to strengthen all workers’ ability to fight.”

The challenge facing workers, he said, “is to gain confidence that we can organize independently of the bosses and fight for our class interests. It will take millions of workers to build a movement that can take power out of the hands of those who run this country.”

Many of the questions workers face — like the question of immigration and the border — have been addressed by the working-class movement over many decades and are described in books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries published by Pathfinder Press. All of them are being offered at a 20 percent discount during the drive.

Spokespeople for the propertied rulers “can talk all they like about build-



Militant/Ruth Robinett

Lea Sherman, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey State Assembly, talks to Susan Wright in her home in Frenchtown March 20. Wright bought a subscription to the *Militant*, four books by SWP leaders on special and contributed to the SWP campaign.

ing trenches and walls along the border with Mexico,” Barnes writes in *Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. “Other Republican and Democratic politicians can make their slightly more genteel-sounding proposals. But nothing will stop the swelling immigration into the United States and other imperialist countries.”

“Despite their intentions, the propertied families around the world are internationalizing the working class,” he said, and “toilers are migrating in larger numbers than ever before in human history, drawn in by the changing needs of capital.”

This is good for the working class, he explains, as it brings new experiences from workers’ struggles into our battles.

Five books are on special for half price with a subscription, featured in the ad on this page.

Party branches and sister Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. are discussing quotas for the sale of books and subscriptions, as well as for the Militant Fighting Fund. These quotas and progress in the drive will be covered weekly in the paper.

We urge readers to join us in this effort!

## Join Socialist Workers Party campaigning in Pittsburgh!

Party members and supporters will be knocking on doors in Pittsburgh and the region April 12-15 to meet workers and gather signatures to put SWP candidate Malcolm Jarrett on the ballot for City Council.

To get involved: [philaswp@verizon.net](mailto:philaswp@verizon.net) or (412) 676-9851.

York, Brown recently moved back in with her mother.

To combat the employers disregard for safety “we need to fight for workers control,” Fruit explained, pointing to the bosses culpability in the recent Boeing air disasters.

Brown replied, “We’re the ones that drive, who ride in trains and planes. Why do we have to pay the price?”

Potash said that she worked in a retail store where workers need a union. Organization is crucial, so we can unite and fight for our own class inter-

## Books on special offer...

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**At left: \$15, \$10 with subscription. Normally \$20.**

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**See distributors on page 8**

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## Help us go over the top in \$115,000 Militant Fighting Fund

The *Militant* has set its annual Militant Fighting Fund at \$115,000 to be raised by May 28. The fund is essential to meet the paper’s operating expenses; field reporting teams to cover developments in world politics; subsidize the price of introductory subscriptions to make it easier to win new readers; to offer free or reduced rate subscriptions to workers behind bars; and to maintain the paper’s website.

The editors of the major dailies are beholden to the capitalist rulers and fill their pages with “news” aimed at obscuring the source of the crisis workers and farmers face and to provide rationalizations for the rulers’ wars abroad, for which they are well paid by the bosses’ lucrative ad fees. In contrast, the *Militant* appeals for funds to the only reliable source possible — its working-class readership.

“We look forward to receiving contributions from those who have just started reading the paper, as well as from long-term readers. And we encourage you to kick in early to the fund drive, so we can start on a solid footing,” John Studer, the paper’s editor, said April 2.

You can contribute online at [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com) or mail checks made out to the *Militant*, to 306 West 37th Street, 13th floor, New York, NY 10018. Help get the fund off to a flying start!

— TERRY EVANS

## Campaign with the Socialist Workers Party candidates!

### California

Dennis Richter, Los Angeles City Council  
Laura Garza, Los Angeles School Board  
Joel Britton Mayor of San Francisco

### Florida

Anthony Dutrow, Miami City Commission

### Kentucky

Amy Husk, Governor

### Minnesota

David Rosenfeld, St. Paul City Council

### Nebraska

Joe Swanson, Mayor of Lincoln

### New Jersey

Lea Sherman, State Assembly  
Candace Wagner, State Assembly

### New York

Seth Galinsky, New York City Public Advocate  
Samantha Hamlin, Mayor of Troy  
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### Pennsylvania

Osborne Hart, Mayor of Philadelphia  
John Staggs, Philadelphia City Council  
Malcolm Jarrett, Pittsburgh City Council

### Texas

Alyson Kennedy, Mayor of Dallas

### Washington

Henry Clay Dennison, Seattle City Council

See directory on page 8 to contact party campaign office nearest you.



# Anti-Trump witch hunt fizzles

**Continued from front page**  
to his election, and no charges could be filed against him. This sharply intensified the political crisis fracturing the Democratic Party and the never-Trumpers in the Republican Party. Mueller’s probe was based on a dossier drawn up by a former British spy paid for by Hillary Clinton’s 2016 campaign that the FBI had *already* deemed unverifiable.

After the election then-FBI boss James Comey met with the president to inform him of the existence of the dossier. That meeting was used as a pretext by the Trump-hating liberal press to open a frenzy of publicity about the smears in it.

As it became increasingly clear that Comey had tried to swing the 2016 election for Clinton, Trump fired him. Assistant Attorney General Rod Rosenstein then set up the special counsel investigation and hired Mueller to head it up. Rosenstein later offered to wear a wire in meetings with Trump in hopes of getting evidence to have him ousted, as unfit to rule.

The ex-FBI boss ordered highly publicized armed raids on many of the president’s former associates. He secured the convictions of eight people on matters totally unrelated to “collusion” between Trump and Moscow. Mueller hoped to squeeze them for dope on any shenanigans by the president he could use. His effort was hailed by the liberal mob who prayed his witch hunt would undo the result of the 2016 election that they cannot stomach.

### Rulers’ real target is working people

The attempt to criminalize political differences between the capitalist rulers’ twin parties, using the FBI, sets a dangerous precedent. The FBI has been used for decades to go after working-class militants and Black rights fighters. It led the frame-up of leaders of the Socialist Workers Party and the Teamsters’ union that mobilized opposition to the U.S. rulers’ entry into the Second World War. Similar methods will be used by the capitalist rulers against working people’s struggles as they pick

up in the years ahead. The real target of the rulers isn’t Trump — it’s the workers who voted for him, or who failed to vote at all. The capitalists and the upper middle class and professionals who serve their interests consider all working people “deplorable” — as Hillary Clinton called them — and seek to restrict their influence on “responsible” decision-making. That is, decisions that reinforce capitalist rule.

Working people in city and countryside face a deep economic and social crisis today. In this context different wings of the Democratic Party are seeking a platform that can garner support. But with an uptick in the economy and the collapse of the Russia probe, Trump looks like a good bet in 2020.

Some Democrats think the best hope is to keep the witch hunt against Trump going, even though they have no facts to help them. Adam Schiff, chair of the House Intelligence Committee, insists that regardless of Mueller’s report, there is “evidence of collusion,” and his committee is going to launch a big investigation to get to the bottom of it.

### Democrats search for a program

But most Democrats, like House leader Nancy Pelosi, want to move on, to campaign against Trump on health care and other issues, in hopes of regaining the White House.

While a lot of liberal media attention is devoted daily to Democratic Socialists of America member Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the party’s “socialist” wing is failing to make gains against its centrist opponents in the party.

J.P. Morgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon says proposals from the likes of Ocasio-Cortez — like her Green New Deal that envisions getting rid of all cows and cars — are an ob-



Chip Bok/Creators.com

stacle to winning support for the reforms he thinks have a shot at regaining some social stability needed by the capitalist rulers.

Dimon described the U.S. “bifurcated economy” as “fundamentally anti-poor” March 18, drawing attention to aspects of the broader crisis bearing down on working people. In an address to J.P. Morgan Chase shareholders in 2017, he complained that “household formation has been slow.” And it’s true that the hopes of millions of working-class young people that they can form their own families *are* being ruined by low wages, indebtedness and rising rents.

Dimon favors a big government job creation program and other measures to soften the blows inflicted on the toiling population by the lawful workings of capitalism. He says, “If a large portion

of the American population cannot earn a living wage, then we will create a situation of permanent social turmoil.”

But the fact is capitalism today cannot produce lasting social peace. The coming apart of the liberal world order, the ongoing crisis of capitalist production and trade, the sharpening rivalry between competing capitalist powers worldwide, and their seemingly endless wars point in the opposite direction.

In contrast to Dimon, Socialist Workers Party candidates explain that the “turmoil” he fears will inevitably produce mass struggles by working people. In these battles workers and farmers will have the opportunity to discover our own worth as we fight together to change the conditions we face and to organize to take political power out of the hands of the bosses and their parties.

# ‘Driver’s license is a necessity for immigrant workers’

**Continued from front page**  
They see that we are driving a car with out-of-state plates and they stop us because they know we won’t have a license.”

“When we go to court, there’s an interpreter who claims he’s there to help us,” Ibarra said. Of course for a fee. “He says he can get the charge lowered to driving with an expired license.”

In New Jersey the maximum fine for driving without a license is \$500, but it’s less for driving with an expired one. Immigrants without papers recognized by the government also run the risk that cops will turn them over to the immigration police.

Marchers chanted “Licencias sí! Promesas no!” (Licenses yes! Not promises!) This is a reference to the promise by Gov. Phil Murphy during his 2017 election campaign that he would change the law so that undocumented immigrants could get a driver’s license.

“A driver’s license is not a privilege, it’s a necessity,” Norma Morales, from Lakewood, told the crowd. “As mothers, we have to take our kids to school, go shopping, go to work. Like every parent we have to earn our bread.

“We earn too little to be giving it away to taxi companies,” she said. “And we know what is waiting for us if we get a ticket. It’s not going to be \$20, it’s going to be a week’s wages.”

Cándido, a worker from New Brunswick, said that “the current administration in Washington says we are criminals, that it’s the worst people of our countries who come here. But that’s a lie.

“Everyone of us came here to work honorably,” he said. “And what’s wrong with that? Everyone who lives here comes from immigrants who came from some other place and have enriched this country.

“Some of us are working two full-time jobs, some a full-time and a part-time job,” he added. “Aren’t we worthy of having a license? We deserve it because we work hard.

“Only by uniting in struggle can we make changes. No one will do it for us,” he said.

Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New Jersey State Assembly, also addressed the marchers. “The bosses and their government of Democrats and Republicans divide us — American born and immigrant, men and women, Caucasian and Black,” she said. “They blame immigrants, scapegoat immigrants. They use this prejudice to make big profits. Their ability to succeed in keeping us fighting among ourselves weakens the whole working class, pushes us all down.

“This isn’t just an issue for immigrant workers. It is a working-class issue for all of us,” she said.

“That’s why the Socialist Workers Party calls for amnesty for all immigrants, for driver’s licenses for all, for the labor movement to take up the fight in defense of immigrant workers, for unity among all workers.”

The May 1 International Workers Day march will start at 10 a.m. at 260 High St. in Perth Amboy. “We are tired of unjust tickets, of having to go to court, and tired of the danger that at any moment we can be separated from our families,” Cosecha says on its publicity for the march. “In New Jersey, driving is not a luxury, it’s a necessity and that’s why we are going to march on May 1 and demand driver’s licenses once and for all.”

### 50 Years of Covert Operations in the US

by Larry Seigle, Farrell Dobbs, Steve Clark

The 13-year political campaign of the Socialist Workers Party to expose decades of spying and disruption by the FBI and other federal cop agencies targeting working-class organizations and other opponents of government policies.

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## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

**CALIFORNIA**  
**Oakland**  
**The Mueller Report and the Crisis in the Democratic and Republican Parties — A Course Forward for Working People.** Speaker: Joel Britton, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of San Francisco. Sat., April 13, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

**WASHINGTON**  
**Seattle**  
**The Fight for Women’s Emancipation. Defend a Woman’s Right to Choose Abortion!** Speaker: Michele Smith, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 12, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 5418 Rainier Ave. S. Tel.: (206) 323-1755.

## —CALENDAR—

**NEW JERSEY**  
**Perth Amboy**  
**May Day March: A Day Without Immigrants — Driver’s Licenses Now!** Wed., May 1, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Meet at 260 High St. Hosted by Cosecha New Jersey.



# Uber drivers fight pay cuts

Continued from front page

terphanie St. Juste, an organizer of the action, told *Los Angeles Magazine*. “Today, I’m making 50 percent of that. They call us partners, but we’re not. They dictate everything.”

Uber and Lyft claim the drivers are “independent contractors” who turn the app on and off when it’s convenient, not employees. But most work full-time for the companies and driving is their main source of income.

They pay for the car, maintenance, insurance and their own gas, as well as all the tickets when the cops pull them over. But the companies decide the rates and rules. Drivers can be deactivated at any time at the whim of the bosses. Uber and Lyft don’t have to foot the bill for workers’ health insurance, retirement, unemployment or workers’ compensation.

The app-based companies have complicated formulas — mileage rates, time rates, bonuses for not signing off at certain times of day, commissions, etc. — making it hard for drivers to know how much they are getting for each ride.

Rebecca Stack-Martinez drives for Uber and Lyft in San Francisco and is an organizer with Gig Workers Ris-

ing. “About a year ago, if I did 100 rides in a week, I could get an extra \$225 to \$250 as a bonus,” she told *Slate* magazine. “This week, if I do 100 rides I’ll get \$50.”

The cuts in income sparked the growth of groups like Los Angeles-based Rideshare Drivers United, which has grown to 3,000 members. There are tens of thousands of drivers in the area.

Rideshare Drivers United is demanding Uber and Lyft reverse the recent pay cuts, cap the companies’ cut for the price of a ride at 10 percent, guarantee the right to appeal deactivations, and win recognition of a drivers’ organization that can negotiate on their behalf.

Uber driver James Hicks told the rally that the latest round of cuts “makes driving part time useless and full time impossible. People should be able to provide for themselves and their family.”

Over 30 rally participants came with signs in Chinese saying, “We refuse exploitation. We refuse oppression,” joining other drivers, men and women, Caucasian, Black and Latino.

Sayed Moheb, originally from Afghanistan, has driven for Uber for four years. Uber “takes more than 65 percent



Militant/Bernie Senter

Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Los Angeles City Council, joins with Uber drivers in Redondo Beach, Calif., protest March 25 against bosses slashing their pay.

of what riders pay. If a rider pays \$40 then I get \$16,” he said, out of which he has to pay all the expenses the company pushes onto his back.

Uber bosses tried to cover up the pay cut, saying it was “a new Quest promotion feature, while also changing the per minute, per mile and minimum fare rates.” Uber claimed drivers ought to like it, it gives them “more control.”

“Both Lyft and Uber are driving the wages down,” Nicole Moore, a part-time driver, told National Public Radio. “If you’re making \$35 in six hours of driving, yeah, you have the independence to work an 18-hour day and barely make a living. There’s no independence in that.”

Lyft, which reported losses of \$911 million last year, became a publicly traded company issuing stock March 29. The company can become profitable only through further attacking the wages of its drivers.

“It’s really obvious,” driver Tyler Sandness told the *Militant* at the rally, “that working people are being pushed to the margins. Productivity has expanded the last 20 years but we haven’t seen a dime of that profit. Wages have been stagnant since the ’90s.”

Meanwhile, the conditions and debt most drivers face continue to take a toll. In New York City 49-year-old Lyft driver Lu Tuan Wu committed suicide in the back seat of his livery car March 23. He is at least the ninth taxi, livery or app-based driver to take their own life since November 2017.

Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Los Angeles City Council, told participants at the rally, “What Uber and Lyft drivers need is a union, jointly with the cab drivers, to fight for a contract, wages, health care and employer responsibility for vehicle costs and upkeep.”

## —ON THE PICKET LINE—

Are you involved in a union organizing drive or strike? Let us know! Send articles, photos and letters to [themilitant@mac.com](mailto:themilitant@mac.com) or through our website, or mail them to 306 W. 37th St., 13th floor, New York, NY 10018.

### Chicago hospital workers rally to protest short staffing, low pay

CHICAGO — Some 200 hospital workers and supporters held a rally outside Mt. Sinai Hospital here March 20 to press demands for higher wages, more staffing and to support nurses who are trying to organize a union. Workers came from hospitals across the city and region.

Many Mt. Sinai workers joined the protest during their lunch breaks, including maintenance worker John Holman. “We are disrespected, underpaid, and mistreated,” he told the *Militant*. “Maintenance and service workers are in the SEIU [Service Employees International Union], but the nurses are not. All the workers at the hospital need to come together. Our contract comes up in two weeks and we want a pay raise.”

“In the hospital you call a code blue when a patient’s life is in danger,” Kim Smith, a patient care technician at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, told the crowd. “We’re calling a code blue. The misplaced priorities of the hospitals are putting us in danger. We’re doing the work of two or three people because of short staffing.”

“Hospital workers face a crisis every two weeks when we get paid and can’t meet our bills,” said Tonya Carter, who makes \$13.53 an hour working in admitting at Mt. Sinai. “They recently cut our schedules by five hours each pay period, and I was already on the edge.” Carter said she had to give up her apartment and move in with a relative.

Joe Novak, a surgical trauma nurse with five years at Mt. Sinai, said that he’s part of the effort to unionize. “The health care institutions pit workers against each other,” he said. “We’re working together to build this union.”

—Naomi Craine



Militant/Dan Fein

Hospital workers and supporters demonstrate outside Mt. Sinai Hospital in Chicago March 20 for higher wages, more staffing and to back nurses’ fight to organize a union.

## —25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO—



April 18, 1994

Battle lines were drawn one minute past midnight April 6 across the United States as more than 75,000 Teamsters left trucks, loading docks, mechanical shops and offices for picket duty when a five-day extension of their national contract with the nation’s major freight bosses expired.

Deep job and pension-cutting concessions demanded by the employers, through a massive increase in the number of low-wage part-time workers, left the union with “no choice but to strike,” Teamster president Ron Carey stated in announcing the walkout — the first national Teamster strike in 15 years.

“We don’t plan to call them,” stated Robert Young, president of ABF Freight Systems and a spokesman for the bosses, “and we don’t expect them to call [us].”

The IAM voted to honor the Teamster picket line until, one unionist said, “they decide to go back.”



April 18, 1969

The success of the massive April 5-6 demonstrations against the Vietnam war offers some important lessons for the future of the movement.

Ever since the beginning of the Paris negotiations some people have insisted that the war was about to end and so there was no real basis — or need — for massive antiwar actions. A different political estimate was made at the GI-civilian antiwar action conference. That meeting in Chicago, held just prior to New Year’s, concluded that Washington was still intent on crushing the Vietnamese revolution and that the bombing pause in the north and the Paris talks were intended to open the way for intensified warfare in South Vietnam.

Moreover, the conference saw that the antiwar forces had the opportunity to add two significant new constituencies to its ranks — the antiwar GIs and the radicalizing high-school youth.



April 15, 1944

Crowding into jammed buses and trains; travelling through weary days and nights; living a catch-as-catch-can existence from day to day, from hour to hour — this is the tortuous lot of America’s newest migrants, the Army wives.

They are thronging into the towns surrounding the army camps, particularly in the west and south, anxious to join their soldier husbands. They come to snatch what happiness they can before their husbands are transferred, or shipped overseas. They experience hardship and humiliation in the overcrowded towns, for the things they need for bare existence — housing, food — have become the objects of gigantic conscienceless profiteering.

The capitalist system stands exposed here in all of its cruelty, its heartlessness, its perfidy. In the midst of the war the government disdains to enforce price ceilings in the army towns.



# Gaza cease-fire can open space

**Continued from front page**  
prevent the launching of incendiary kites that have burned farmland in southern Israel in recent months. During these protests Hamas has urged participants to try and breach the border. When the Israel Defense Forces respond with lethal force, Hamas seeks to utilize the subsequent deaths to win support against Israel in bourgeois public opinion. Some 260 Palestinians have been killed and 7,000 wounded, mostly by Israeli sniper fire, since Hamas initiated the confrontations.

Four Palestinians were killed March 30, when over 40,000 gathered to mark the one-year anniversary of the weekly March of Return protests. Hamas operatives largely prevented marchers from approaching the border fence.

Hamas, with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood and on-again, off-again ally of the rulers in Tehran, took control of Gaza in 2007. Since then it has fought three wars with Israel. Its stated goal is to drive all Jews out of Israel and Palestine.

But Hamas' Jew-hatred, provocations and disdain for Palestinian lives have made it increasingly isolated. The group today faces unrest inside Gaza as it offloads the economic crisis onto working people. Youth unem-

ployment stands at 65 percent. The hardship facing workers and farmers is intensified by the blockade imposed by the governments of Israel and Egypt. After Hamas hiked taxes on food and cigarettes working people and youth protested the measures in several areas of Gaza March 14 and for days afterward.

Demonstrators carried signs that read, "Down with price hikes" and "I want to live in dignity." Cops dispersed protesters and arrested over 1,000 people.

### Tehran orders attacks on Israel

The day the Israeli government and Hamas agreed upon the cease-fire, another rocket was fired from Gaza and struck Mishmeret, north of Tel Aviv, injuring seven people. Hamas and Egyptian officials say the attack was carried out by Palestinian Islamic Jihad based in Gaza, under orders from the Iranian government. In recent years the rulers in Iran have decreased their funding of Hamas and boosted the coffers of Islamic Jihad, considering its leaders more compliant in carrying out attacks on Israel in hopes of scuttling any peace deal between Hamas and Tel Aviv.

Tehran fears that any reduction in military tensions between Israel and Gaza will allow the Israeli rulers to focus more intently on their bombardment of military bases Tehran has established across neighboring Syria. The rulers in Iran took advantage of the brutal war conducted by Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad to move forces into that country.

In the 1980s the Iranian capitalists used brutal repression to consolidate their class rule and defeat strug-

### Kurdistan debate on road to women's emancipation



Militant/Ögmundur Jónsson

SULAYMANIYAH, Kurdistan Region, Iraq — Sixty people turned out here Mar. 30 for a lively discussion and debate on the struggle for women's emancipation, hosted by two local youth groups, Tema and Nova. Alyson Kennedy, the 2016 Socialist Workers Party's candidate for president of the United States and its candidate in this year's election for mayor of Dallas, spoke on the roots of women's oppression and a working-class road forward.

Kennedy drew on her past experience in coal miners' battles and other social struggles, as well as her political work discussing the party's program and activity with working people in Dallas and surrounding towns and rural areas. She was joined by Dashne Nariman, who spoke about the challenges of the fight for women's rights today in Kurdistan and Iraq.

Savan Ako, speaking above, welcomed meeting participants on behalf of the organizers. "We want to give a different reading on women's issues than the ones before in south Kurdistan," she said. "We believe that women's emancipation can't come true unless men and women work together on ending the capitalist system."

— ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON



Palestinians in Gaza City protesting rising prices, taxes were attacked by Hamas-led police, more than 1,000 were arrested.

gles by workers, farmers, women, Kurds and other oppressed nationalities that had opened up during the 1979 Iranian Revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed shah. The Iranian rulers have sought for decades to increase their clout across the region, extending abroad the counterrevolution they carried through against working people at home.

Tehran's intervention around the region is a deadly obstacle to working people advancing their interests. A statement by the Socialist Work-

ers Party National Committee issued in December 2017 explains that talks to recognize both Israel and an independent Palestinian state "must recognize the right of Jews everywhere to take refuge in Israel in face of the global rise of Jew-hatred and anti-Semitic violence, as well as the unconditional right of the dispossessed Palestinian people to a contiguous, sovereign homeland on territory ... conquered and occupied by the Israeli government during the 1967 war." (The entire statement is available on the *Militant's* website.)

President Donald Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights March 21. The Israeli military has occupied the area since the end of the 1967 Six-Day War.

## Iraq protests win firing of governor in ferry disaster

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Thousands took to the streets in the Iraqi city of Mosul March 22, the day after an overcrowded ferry capsized in the Tigris River, killing more than 100 people. "Our demand is the governor's resignation," a protester told Kurdistan 24 news station at the action. "All officials must be dismissed," another added.

Most of those who drowned were women and children, who were taking the boat to an amusement park on Umm Rabaen to celebrate Nowruz, the Kurdish and Persian New Year's holiday and Mother's Day. Several dozen are still listed as missing. The vessel was overloaded to five times its rated capacity, according to the Mosul Civil Defense Authority. It was traveling after heavy rains and a water release from a dam upstream made water levels high and the current strong. The ferry flipped over onto many of the passengers.

Working people in the city, who've lived through real economic difficulties since the destruction wrought by Islamic State's seizure and occupation, the battle to throw IS out, and



AP/Farid Abdulwahed

Angry relatives of over 100 killed in sinking of ferry blocked road chanting "no to corruption" when Mosul's governor arrived March 22. Victims had been celebrating New Year's holiday.

official mismanagement during the recovery, were outraged. When Nawfal al-Akoub, the provincial governor, came to the area he was met by people throwing rocks at his convoy. As his car sped away, it hit two people who had to be rushed to the hospital.

"We are protesting today for over

100 people who died because of corruption, destruction and greed," one woman said in tears.

In response to the public outcry, Iraq's parliament met two days later and voted overwhelmingly to fire the governor. An Iraqi court issued a warrant for Akoub's arrest.

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#### Socialist Workers Party statement



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# Woodfox shines light on prison abuse, solitary confinement

## Albert Woodfox, one of the Angola 3, on speaking tour after nearly 44 years in solitary



From left, Ismael Nazario, who was thrown in solitary as a teenager at Rikers Island prison; Albert Woodfox; and David Rothenberg, founder of the Fortune Society, speaking March 28.

BY WILLIE COTTON

NEW YORK — Albert Woodfox spent nearly 44 years in solitary confinement in a 6-by-9 foot cell in Louisiana’s notorious Angola prison. He and fellow prisoners Herman Wallace and Robert King came into the sights of authorities there after organizing a chapter of the Black Panther Party and joining with fellow prisoners to fight against the brutal conditions they faced.

He won his freedom in 2016 and is now on a national speaking tour promoting his just released book *Solitary: Unbroken by Four Decades in Solitary Confinement. My Story of Transformation and Hope*. He is campaigning for an end to solitary confinement. (See ad this page.)

The tour and book expose the abusive conditions that exist in prisons across the country. And just as importantly, they highlight the example set by Woodfox and others who stand up to those abuses and express solidarity with others who assert their humanity. The tour is organized by his publisher, Grove Atlantic.

At a meeting of over 150 people at the Brooklyn Public Library March 27 he explained how the prison system is designed to “break a man’s spirit.” The authorities in Angola used racial segregation as the most effective way to control the prisoners and to keep inmates divided. To combat that, the three began to organize interracial basketball and football games and to talk to fellow prisoners regardless of skin color, to advance solidarity. “We were making a difference,” he said.

Prison officials saw this as a threat. They framed up Woodfox and Wallace for the 1972 killing of a guard during a

riot in the prison. King was victimized in a separate frame-up after a fellow prisoner was stabbed to death on his cellblock. Together they became known as the Angola 3. They never stopped organizing and fighting.

King was released in 2001. Wallace died in October 2013, three days after his release.

To confront their conditions, “we turned toward society, not away,” Woodfox said. “I became a voracious reader. Mao, Malcolm X, Ho Chi Minh, Martin [Luther King Jr.], Gandhi,” among

others. He studied law to be better able to fight and help others. “Other prisoners would sneak us law books into our cells.”

Woodfox said there were two battles they undertook while in solitary that he was most proud of. One was a hunger strike to stop the inhumane way meals were shoved under prisoners’ cell doors, as if they were animals. The unity and determination of the strikers forced prison authorities to cut slots in the doors for passing the food trays.

The second was a fight against humiliating strip searches.

At the meeting in Brooklyn and the next day at the Fortune Society in Long Island City, Woodfox

was asked his opinion on a bill before the New York Senate that would limit solitary confinement to 15 consecutive days.

“Try it for *one* day,” he told those at the Fortune Society, “and see what you think.” He is campaigning for the total elimination of solitary confinement.

Several former prisoners spoke from the floor about their experiences in New York state lockup. “They treat us like animals,” one said to general agreement.

Another, who was recently released after 23 years behind bars, described

being “thrown in the box [solitary] because the guards said I wasn’t eating my lunch fast enough.”

Guards believe “they can do whatever they want, beat you, even kill you and nothing will happen to them,” Woodfox said, because they think no one knows or cares. “Until that changes, the abuse will continue. There needs to be oversight and accountability.”

His book and tour are helping spread the word.

Lanie Fleischer and Seth Galinsky contributed to this article.

### Hear Albert Woodfox

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## Outcry hits attempt to gut Florida voting rights victory

BY SETH GALINSKY

Working people and other supporters of democratic rights are standing up to attempts to undermine a popular victory for the voting rights of ex-prisoners in Florida. Amendment 4 to the state Constitution, which passed by 64.6 percent last November, restores these rights to more than a million people released after serving time on felony convictions.

Newly elected Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis, who won with less than 50 percent of the vote, announced after the election that the legislature needed to pass “implementing language.” He hoped to restrict the effect of the amendment.

The amendment states that voting rights for those convicted of felonies shall be restored “after they complete all terms of their sentence including parole or probation,” except for those “convicted of murder or sexual offenses.”

Before the amendment passed, regaining the right to vote was at the whim of the governor. For all but a small number of ex-prisoners this meant they were permanently denied the right to vote.

Most working people, whatever their skin color or nationality, backed the amendment because they know there is nothing “just” about the so-called criminal justice system. Many have done time themselves, whether “guilty” or not, or have friends or relatives who have. Most are well aware that it affects all work-

ing people, while disproportionately falling on those who are Black.

The governor and some of his allies in the Florida Assembly and Senate are pushing for a new law that would prevent ex-prisoners from regaining the right to vote unless they have paid off every penny of outstanding court costs and other financial obligations, including restitution judgments and civil penalties. They also want to change the definition of murder to include attempted murder and to rewrite the definition of sexual offenses to include prostitution. This would prevent tens of thousands from being able to vote.

Coral Nichol, 40, told a state Senate committee March 25 that she owes \$190,000 in restitution after serving four years in prison and 10 on probation for grand theft. Under her court-approved restitution plan, she pays \$100 a month. If the Senate plan is signed into law, she won’t be eligible to vote for 190 years.

Some opponents of the proposed restrictions called the Republican-sponsored plan a “poll tax,” a reference to the days before the overthrow of Jim Crow segregation when Blacks and poor Caucasian workers were blocked from voting by a tax levied on anyone who wanted to cast a ballot. Poll taxes were banned with passage of the 24th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1964.

After an outcry, the bill’s sponsors have made changes to ease some of the most egregious proposed restrictions. None of the bills have come to a vote before the Assembly or the Senate yet.

### Protesters rally at state Capitol

Several hundred people, many former prisoners, rallied by the state Capitol in Tallahassee March 12 to defend Amendment 4.

Neil Volz, treasurer of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, told the rally they are fighting for “full implementation” of the amendment and more.

“There’s a huge challenge trying to re-enter society and it involves trying to get a job, get a license and the ability to be hired by somebody,” he said, noting they would fight against the discrimination former prisoners face re-establishing their lives on the outside.

Volz said they would also be campaigning to change some of Florida’s laws that make felonies out of acts that in most states are prosecuted as misdemeanors. In Texas theft of under \$1,500 is a misdemeanor, not a felony. “In Florida the threshold is \$300,” Volz said.

“At first the governor was saying that nobody should register until the state passed a new law,” Cecile Scoon, first vice president of the Florida League of Women Voters, one of the groups that backed the amendment, told the *Militant* by phone March 30. Some former prisoners were worried that if they registered and were found ineligible they might be prosecuted for voting fraud.

But the outcry was so strong the governor had to back down. Thousands have filed to regain their voting rights.

Scoon was at the March 12 rally. She said it’s “my great pleasure” to meet former prisoners, inspired by the victory, “who say, ‘I’m going to stand up for myself.’ It’s our goal for people who have been oppressed to get their own voices.”

At least 11 other states have laws on the books as restrictive as Florida had before the amendment was passed. There are fights being waged for referenda and changes in a number of them, including in Iowa and Kentucky. In only one state, Vermont, do those convicted of felony charges retain their right to vote even while behind bars.

## Further reading

The Cuban Five, imprisoned more than a decade on frame-up charges in the U.S., explain why the “justice system” and jails are used by the U.S. rulers to “enable a powerful minority to control a vast majority who are poor and dispossessed.”

See distributors p. 3

THE CUBAN FIVE talk about their lives within the US working class

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# Fidel: ‘Without Che’s ideas, communism can’t be built’

The excerpt below is from *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Ernesto Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. The French edition is one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for April. The piece is from “Che’s Ideas Are Absolutely Relevant Today,” an Oct. 8, 1987, speech by Castro commemorating the 20th anniversary of Guevara’s death. In 1959 the Cuban Revolution opened the socialist revolution in the Americas, initiating a renewal of Marxism and inspiring a new generation of revolutionary-minded youth worldwide. In the mid-1980s, Castro led a rectification process in Cuba to reverse the growing impact of bureaucratism and use of capitalist methods on working-class consciousness and morale by re-emphasizing voluntary labor and deepening involvement of workers and farmers in political life. Copyright © 1989 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Che Guevara leading voluntary work in Cuba, early 1960s. “In this period of the building of socialism we can see the new man and woman being born,” Che said. This process continually develops, he said, “hand in hand with the development of new economic forms.”

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

What are we rectifying? We’re rectifying all those things — and there are many — that strayed from the revolutionary spirit, from revolutionary work, revolutionary virtue, revolutionary effort, revolutionary responsibility; all those things that strayed from the spirit of solidarity among people. We’re rectifying all

the shoddiness and mediocrity that is precisely the negation of Che’s ideas, his revolutionary thought, his style, his spirit, and his example.

I really believe, and I say it with great satisfaction, that if Che were sitting in this chair, he would feel jubilant. He would be happy about what we are doing these days, just like he would have felt very unhappy during that unstable period, that disgraceful period of building socialism in which there began to prevail a series of ideas, of mechanisms, of bad habits, which would have caused Che to feel profound and terrible bitterness. [Applause]

For example, voluntary work, the brainchild of Che and one of the best things he left us during his stay in our country and his part in the revolution, was steadily on the decline. It became a formality almost. It would be done on the occasion of a special date, a Sunday. People would sometimes run around and do things in a disorganized way.

The bureaucrat’s view, the technocrat’s view that voluntary work was neither basic nor essential gained more and more ground. The idea was that voluntary work was kind of silly, a waste of time, that problems had to be solved with overtime, with more and more overtime, and this while the regular workday was not even being used efficiently. We had fallen into the

bog of bureaucracy, of overstaffing, of work norms that were out of date, the bog of deceit, of untruth. We’d fallen into a whole host of bad habits that Che would have been really appalled at. ...

Che would have been appalled if he’d been told that money was becoming man’s concern, man’s fundamental motivation. He who warned us so much against that would have been appalled. Work shifts were being shortened and millions of hours of overtime reported; the mentality of our workers was being corrupted and men were increasingly being motivated by the pesos on their minds.

Che would have been appalled for he knew that communism could never be attained by wandering down those beaten capitalist paths and that to follow along those paths would mean eventually to forget all ideas of solidarity and even internationalism. To follow those paths would imply never developing a new man and a new society. ...

Those paths I repeat — and Che knew it very well — would never lead us to building real socialism, as a first and transitional stage to communism.

But don’t think that Che was naive, an idealist, or someone out of touch with reality. Che understood and took reality into consideration. But Che believed in man. And if we don’t believe in man, if we think that man is an incorrigible little animal, capable of ad-

vancing only if you feed him grass or tempt him with a carrot or whip him with a stick — anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a revolutionary; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a socialist; anybody who believes this, anybody convinced of this will never be a communist. [Applause]

Our revolution is an example of what faith in man means because our revolution started from scratch, from nothing. We did not have a single weapon, we did not have a penny, even the men who started the struggle were unknown, and yet we confronted all that might, we confronted their hundreds of millions of pesos, we confronted the thousands of soldiers, and the revolution triumphed because we believed in man. Not only was victory made possible, but so was confronting the empire and getting this far, only a short way off from celebrating the twenty-ninth anniversary of the triumph of the revolution. How could we have done all this if we had not had faith in man? ...

In essence — in essence! — Che was radically opposed to using and developing capitalist economic laws and categories in building socialism. He advocated something that I have often insisted on: Building socialism and communism is not just a matter of producing and distributing wealth but is also a matter of education and consciousness. He was firmly opposed to using these categories, which have been transferred from capitalism to socialism, as instruments to build the new society.

At a given moment some of Che’s ideas were incorrectly interpreted and, what’s more, incorrectly applied. Certainly no serious attempt was ever made to put them into practice, and there came a time when ideas diametrically opposed to Che’s economic thought began to take over. ...

But many of Che’s ideas are absolutely relevant today, ideas without which I am convinced communism cannot be built, like the idea that man should not be corrupted; that man should never be alienated; the idea that without consciousness, simply producing wealth, socialism as a superior society could not be built, and communism could never be built. [Applause]

*April* BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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# End solitary confinement! Voting rights for ex-prisoners!

The following statement was released April 3 by Seth Galinsky, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City Public Advocate.

The capitalist rulers’ so-called criminal justice system and its prisons have absolutely nothing to do with “rehabilitation.” They have everything to do with breaking the spirit of those caught up in it and sending a message to all working people to “stay in our place.” But as the crisis of the capitalist system intensifies, the rulers more and more fear the working class, and the glimmers they see of labor and social explosions coming in the future. That’s why there are more prisoners in the U.S. than anywhere else in the world. And that’s why you hear current and former prisoners say the authorities “treat us like animals.”

That is no exaggeration. Working people are railroaded to prison, guilty or not. Some 90 percent of those behind bars never went to trial, but were pressured into signing plea bargains under the threat of longer sentences. On average some 60,000 or more are in solitary

confinement every year, sometimes for decades — like Albert Woodfox and his two fellow prisoners and Black Panthers known as the Angola 3. Workers behind bars are given rotten food and woefully inadequate health care. They’re beaten by guards. There are constant attempts to censor what they read, including the *Militant* newspaper. They face lack of books and culture. And they face ridiculous fees and charges for anything they can get. Here in New York hundreds protested during the coldest days this winter when word got out that prison authorities had done nothing to restore heat and lights at the federal jail in Brooklyn. And when our brothers and sisters behind bars get out of prison, they face discrimination in hiring, housing, education and denial of their rights. But the capitalist rulers and their prison bosses underestimate us. When Woodfox won his freedom after nearly 44 years of solitary confinement, he was proud, unbroken and determined to get out the truth. That’s what he’s doing, touring around the country and promoting his new book about prison conditions and the

fight for dignity behind bars. I urge you to go hear him or read the book. I did and it was well worth it. Prisons are a “grotesquely magnified reproduction of the social relations, values, and ‘business practices’ of the dog-eat-dog capitalist world that have spawned the US ‘justice’ system,” Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters explains in her introduction to “*It’s the Poor Who Face the Savagery of the US ‘Justice’ System*”: *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*. Growing numbers of working people are looking for ways to fight the exploitation and oppression of the capitalist rulers and show solidarity with each other today. Fellow workers behind bars are an important part of this battle and deserve our support. That’s why my campaign speaks out against moves by the government in Florida to undermine implementation of Amendment 4 of the state Constitution, passed overwhelmingly last November, which restores voting rights to over a million former prisoners. Voting rights for all former prisoners! End the barbaric use of solitary confinement!

## Ongoing trade rivalry between US and Chinese rulers ripples worldwide

**Continued from front page** ance worldwide to try to set back this inexorable rise of Beijing. When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, following a decade of negotiations after the Cold War, the U.S. and other imperialist rulers welcomed Beijing’s open embrace of capitalism. Now Washington seeks to parry the Chinese rulers’ use of protectionism, theft and spying — measures used by the U.S. rulers and other previous rising capitalist powers to get on top. Washington has levied heavy duties on about half of Chinese imports into the U.S., claiming it is contesting “economic aggression” by Beijing. President Donald Trump is trying to force more openings for U.S. bosses’ and bankers’ trade and investment. These moves have slowed economic expansion in China. This deepening global competition comes as renewed concerns of an international economic slowdown compounded by political dislocations have gripped capitalist investors. After the Trump administration imposed the tariffs last July, in a bid to force concessions from Beijing, the Chinese rulers imposed retaliatory duties on agricultural and other imports from the U.S. The White House threatened more comprehensive tariffs last November, but both governments suspended further retaliatory moves as negotiations continued. Chinese and U.S. trade officials have been working

on an overall agreement in preparation for a summit between Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. U.S. negotiators say they are making progress in imposing Washington’s will. Trump is pushing on long-held U.S. complaints about technology transfers imposed on foreign investors in China, the lack of protection of intellectual property rights there, the inability of U.S. and other foreign firms to take majority ownership over companies in China, and rampant cyber theft. Washington also objects to Beijing subsidizing its state-owned enterprises. Even if an agreement is reached, some tariffs may be continued on Chinese goods for “a substantial period,” to ensure Beijing’s continuing compliance, Trump warned March 20. **Shifts in economic relationship of forces** The U.S.-China trade rivalry is part of greater shifts in the relationship of forces among competing capitalist nations worldwide. The combined economic activity of capitalist economies in Asia will by next year outweigh that of the rest of the world in sheer size. By some measures, China, with over four times the population of the United States, will soon supersede the U.S. as the largest economy. India has displaced Japan and Germany to be number three. Indonesia by

2023 is expected to replace Russia at number six. These shifts are accelerating the coming apart of the European Union. The European Commission, the bureaucracy that supposedly unites and rules over the rival European capitalist powers, issued a statement March 22 branding China as a “systemic rival.” The Trump administration has been pressuring European governments not to allow China’s largest tech company, Huawei, to bid on their new 5G wireless and technology infrastructure projects, on the grounds of national security. French President Emmanuel Macron claimed March 22 that “the time of European naivete is ended,” saying that China “took advantage of our divisions.” He called for European rulers to more effectively hunker down to protect their interests against Beijing. But the fact is that rather than greater unity, the EU operates to the advantage of the more powerful capitalist powers — especially Berlin and to a lesser degree Paris — sucking wealth out of the weaker southern and other states. A recent visit to Europe by Chinese President Xi to promote Chinese investment there shows these divisions, as each ruling class on the continent pursues its own national interests more openly.

The Chinese leader signed a memorandum with the capitalist rulers in Rome March 23 to join Beijing’s international “Belt and Road” initiative. Rome is the first of the larger European countries to break ranks to join the Chinese initiative, following 13 central and east European nations, as well as many in Asia. The initiative is a series of vast infrastructure projects linking the markets of Eurasia by land and sea. The name is a nice sounding phrase meant to sugarcoat Beijing’s push to expand investment and influence, and, if government’s can’t pay, to seize ports and properties abroad. Washington has raised the alarm over Belt and Road being used to extend Chinese power — and competition — as well as creating a “debt trap.” Xi met March 26 with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Macron and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Merkel said the initiative was an “important” project for the German rulers too, stressing their economic “interdependence” with China. Duisburg in the Ruhr Valley already functions as the Belt and Road terminal for northern Europe. Macron is happy for European-based Airbus — a joint project led by French, German and Spanish capital — to conclude a multibillion euro deal for Chinese airlines to buy 300 of its planes. The Boeing bosses’ troubles over their grounded 737 MAX jets made this easier.

One Macron supporter told the English-language online Asia Times March 27 that “Europe” had “28 different policies, with countries competing against each other to attract investment.” Unity against Chinese economic penetration in Europe appears to have gone out the window.

## LETTERS

### All workers deserve licenses

The April 1 *Militant* article “New York Protests Demand Gov’t Give Immigrants Driver’s Licenses” was timely. This is an important fight along the road to uniting all workers in this country. You also mentioned that this was part of a larger fight to prevent the government from victimizing workers by taking away or denying us driver’s licenses. Here in Virginia, the state can take away a person’s driver’s license for nonpayment of any government or court-ordered fine or fee. In a rural state like Virginia, this often leads to workers either losing their job, or driving without a valid license, which can result in real jail time if caught. In 2018 nearly 1 million Virginians — 1 out of every 6 of the state’s drivers — had lost their licenses due to failure to pay court debts, in many cases resulting from misdemeanor offenses. These court costs have become a major source of funding for

state governments like Virginia. *Mike Galati  
Fredericksburg, Virginia*

### Prison system is a business

The Florida Department of Corrections never refunded our money [after prisoners lost all the music they purchased when officials switched vendors for mp3 players]. Each song costs us \$1.70 and some of us have over 1,000 songs. Do the math! If I had known they were going to do this, I would never have spent my family’s hard earned money on it!

#### ‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

The fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. Send a check or money order payable to the ‘Militant’ and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Or donate online at [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)

The Department of Corrections is more than just a prison system, it’s a business. Every job is done by an inmate from plumbing and welding to cooking and laundry.

They refuse to pay us for our labor. Without us they wouldn’t be able to run the institutions.

They price gouge us on canteen items, charging two to three times more than the local stores. They charge us to put money on our accounts, then charge us a fee to spend our money.

The prison system here is a warehouse operated for profit and each inmate is just another item placed up on the shelf.

*A prisoner  
Florida*

**The letters column is an open forum. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**